



## Monitoring experiences in the follow-up of autistic children: Report of pedagogical workshops

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Received: 07 Jan 2021;

Received in revised form:

21 Feb 2021;

Accepted: 25 Mar 2021;

Available online: 17 Apr 2021

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**Keywords**— Autistic Disorder, Faculty,

**Abstract**— Objective: to describe the pedagogical strategies and training experiences developed during the monitoring stage in the follow-up of autistic children, focusing on reaching their levels of potential development, using Vygotsky's socio-historical theory as a basis for reflection, which states that human development takes place through the social relationships that the individual establishes throughout his life, that is, that the teaching-learning process also develops through the interactions that unfold throughout his life. Method: This article consists of an experience report of the implementation of pedagogical workshops in the monitoring internship at a Child Psychological Care Center (CAPSi), located in the municipality of Ananindeua, State of Pará, Brazil, from September to November 2015, outlined using descriptive,

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*observational and participatory methods. Results: We highlight some cases of evolution in relation to social interaction, which is the most compromised aspect in autistic people, emphasizing the importance of intervention for the full development of these people since childhood. Conclusion: Learning and the result of applying these methodologies are important records in the daily practice of health professionals, as they develop a more acute look around people with special needs, valuing their potential inside and outside the school environment, with a view to promote human emancipation, which is the true exercise of citizenship.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This study reports the experiences of monitoring the follow-up of autistic children during the teaching-learning process, which involved students, teachers and professional assistants, during the application of pedagogical workshops in the routine of a Child Psychological Care Center (CAPSi), city Ananindeua, State of Pará, Brazil. In the current scenario of education, it is recurrent for people with disabilities and their families to report the meanings attributed to care from their experiences and the importance of school, managers and teachers promoting in their practice the true inclusion.

As for this discussion, about the organization of the school, the appropriate care to be offered to People with Disabilities, mainly related to the training of teachers who develop or will develop pedagogical activities, in the common classrooms, to include all students, the article 27 of Law No. 13,146 / 15 guides and ensures that: "Education is the right of people with disabilities, ensuring an inclusive educational system at all levels of learning throughout their lives", so it is possible to achieve the maximum development, both of their talents and physical abilities, as well as sensory, intellectual and social, respecting their characteristics, interests and learning needs<sup>1</sup>. The laws historically constructed in the country have corroborated the sense of producing major changes in the Brazilian educational context<sup>2-3</sup>. This situation can be seen in the data from the School Census in relation to special education, showing an evolution in the number of enrollments, which went from 337,326 in 1998 to 900,000 in 2014, expressing a 300% growth in the number of students enrolled in regular education. Regarding the entry into common classes, it was found in 1998 that 13% of enrolled students were attending regular classes in regular education, and in 2014, the data showed that this percentage increased to 79%<sup>4</sup>.

Implementation of the Berenice Piana Law (Law No. 12.764 / 12), which institutes the right of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, is one of the first steps towards their insertion in the school environment. This law ensures in Article 2, the incentive to the training and qualification

of professionals specialized in the care of people with autism spectrum disorder, making it mandatory and emphasizing the training of professionals<sup>5-6</sup>.

According to the Ministry of Education, "teacher education and training are the main goals to be achieved in the realization of the educational system that truly includes everyone"<sup>7</sup>.

The Ministry of Education compared data from the 2003 and 2013 School Census, and pointed to a 177% growth in the training of teachers in special education. In 2013 the census counted 93,371 educators, contrasting with the data for 2003, which was only 33,691 trained teachers<sup>4</sup>.

The reported data refer to a reflection; there is a real increase in the number of students in regular schools, that is, they have had access to schools, which is positive, however some questions arise: how is the quality of education offered to these students? How are teachers being trained? Are schools really prepared? These questions cannot be quantified, but observed and analyzed, so that we can know their evolution within society. The choice of this theme is justified as a way of contributing to studies on the inclusion of autistic children in the education network of the Northern Region of Brazil, sharing the monitoring experience, in which, we present and describe some interventionist methodologies and guidelines in relation to reception of autistic people, more specifically children. Thus, we aim with this study to describe the pedagogical strategies and training experiences developed during the monitoring stage in the monitoring of autistic children, as well as to propose some guidelines for the relationship with autistic children and to describe the pedagogical resources used by the professionals of the Psychological Care Center Infantile (CAPSi) in the interaction with autistic children.

## **II. METHOD**

### **Description of the experience**

Experience report, which describes aspects experienced by the authors, in the opportunity of a

monitoring internship at the Child Psychological Care Center (CAPSi), located in the municipality of Ananindeua, State of Pará, Brazil, from September to November 2015, after prior authorization from the coordination and direction of the service. It is a qualitative look, which approached the problem outlined using descriptive, observational and participatory methods.

CAPSi assists children with intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Global Developmental Disorder (TGD), hyperactivity and attention deficit free of charge. Promoting diagnosis and continued treatment, having a multidisciplinary team in its assistance body, aiming to assist children in all their needs, both physical and psychological, and promote their full development.

The experience report is a tool of descriptive research that presents a reflection on an action or a set of actions that address a situation experienced in the professional sphere of interest to the scientific community<sup>8</sup>.

The research project was not submitted to the Research Ethics Committee because it is an account of the authors' experience, with the consent of the place where the non-mandatory curricular internship took place and guarantees of data confidentiality. The following data collection techniques were used: field diary, structured observation (participating researcher), consultation with the clinical care form, participation in activities (pedagogical workshops). Personal data were not used, only those of interest to the study, but without mentioning data that could identify the research participants.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Monitoring steps

During the monitoring, we monitor the activities of the psychologist and pedagogue responsible for the preparation and application of the workshops. Upon arriving at the site, the psychologist received the students and teachers, which favored familiarization with the environment and enabled knowledge about the dynamics of activities, opening hours and proposed learning objectives.

The workshops were offered three times a week, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The monitoring was divided into three moments, which will be described below:

#### Step 01: preparation

At this time, non-systematic research was carried out on articles and relevant literature, whose themes were strategies to include autistic children and young people at different levels of education, with the main focus on basic

education. The researches were carried out during the period of two months that preceded this experience in the databases SCIELO, LILACS, PUBMED, Cochrane, Google scholar and some repositories of dissertations in Brazil, with the objective of deepening the knowledge on the subject to subsidize the actions in the monitoring.

#### Step 02: observation

During this period, only the actions taken by the psychologist and the pedagogue were observed, without interference. This step took place over two weeks.

#### Stage 03: intervention

At this stage, the participation of students and professors in the workshops actually started, applying the proposed activities together with the multidisciplinary team responsible for the service. This moment was able to provide a better relationship with the children and their legal guardians, allowing the authors to verify an improvement in the communication between the participants and an increase in the interaction of the children, an aspect more compromised in autistic people. The last step was marked by the collection of information about the strategies. All proposed activities had an objective that was explained to those involved before the workshop started and recorded in a field diary.

#### Guidelines and methodology

The groups attended during the workshops were formed by children between 5 to 10 years old, mostly boys. All CAPSi patients, diagnosed with autism, varying from mild degrees to more severe conditions.

The workshops attended an average of 15 children per day, due to the number of people available to minister them. Children were separated by age into three groups, in equal numbers, attended at different and predetermined times. Each workshop lasted an hour, and in some cases, the children's guardians participated in the moment. These measures aimed to organize and avoid direct exposure to diverse and intense stimuli, as such stimuli could overload them by saturation of information, leading them to present a disorganized behavior, due to the difficulty in communicating their needs<sup>9</sup>.

The workshop had two moments, the first being the reception of children. This stage was marked by socialization between them. The second moment was the application of stimulating activities, such as free drawing, painting, among others. The two moments had different mediation instruments, but with the same objective, to improve the interaction of children with the environment. In this context, according to the socio-historical approach, learning and development are intrinsically related processes and act through a dialectical process<sup>10-11</sup>, which

we believe to be essential in the teaching and learning process.

### **First moment**

The first moment consisted mainly of welcoming the children, and signaling the beginning of activities, important steps for the relationship with autistic people, since they are ritualized, have difficulties in interacting with their peers and often have difficulties in changing their routine<sup>12</sup>.

This stage aims to insert the children in that new moment, trying to calm them down to the maximum. At this time, we put on children's songs, happy and known by many of them, which encouraged them to sing and dance with us and with their peers, that is, we promoted their interaction with the environment, because interaction is an essential field of socially shared reality., providing the intersubjective context for the symbolization process<sup>13</sup>.

### **Second moment**

After the reception, we started the stimulating activities. Each child had a different degree of autism, and as the workshop was a continuity of treatment, the psychologist knew the profile of the patients and their needs at that time, that is, each child performed a specific activity, designed for him and that would contemplate some of your therapeutic needs. Here, taking Vygotsky's approach as a reference<sup>11</sup>, we worked precisely in the children's Proximal Development Zone (ZDP), seeking through activities to reach the highest levels of potential development of these children.

We can cite as an example the case of one of the children who started the workshops in the same period of monitoring, so we can follow her evolution with the group in more detail. He, initially with very little interaction, after three months, already held the hand of his colleagues during the wheel games and accepted our touch.

In the case above, we can say that at the initial moment, the real level of development of these children was low interaction, but through mediation (play), we were reaching their level of potential development, that is, increasing ability to interact with their pairs. As Vygotsky<sup>11</sup> believed, the individual characteristics and even their individual attitudes are impregnated with exchanges with the collective, therefore, even what we consider to be the most individual of a human being was built from his relationship with the individual and his environment.

At the end of all the workshops, the children were encouraged to keep the toys and / or objects with which they had played during the activities, aiming to promote

their sensory discipline and organization inside and outside that environment. This attitude is important due to the fact that autistic children respond well to organized systems, therefore, the teacher or mediator must organize the environment to be able to teach students and they can develop their skills<sup>14</sup>.

### **Resources**

During the workshops, several resources were used as mediating instruments, and below we present some of them and their objectives.

Some proposed activities: making paintings and drawings using gouache paint, colored pencils and brush; collage with crepe paper; music therapy, using children's songs; use of educational toys such as puzzle, lego and memory game to stimulate reasoning, use of the rubber ball to stimulate confidence and balance; use of the sensory tree with different textures; use of the "make believe" strategy, to stimulate the imagination of the autistic child, as he / she perceives the concrete more easily.

Free drawing (Figure 01) was a resource used to stimulate fine motor development, since autistic children have difficulties with hand movement, also influencing their writing. They used the magnetic board and pilot pen or sheets of A4 paper in white and colored pencils to make their drawings.



*Fig.1: Drawing done by a patient from the Center.  
(Personal Collection).*

The activity called "Pretend" (Figure 02) aimed to stimulate children's creativity, considering that people with autism have difficulty with non-literal language. Thus, we stimulated his imagination, inventing stories and simulating everyday situations (vignettes), such as cooking, going to the beauty salon, among others.



*Fig.2: "Pretend" activity. (Personal Collection).*

One of the dialogues between one of the children and me during the activity:

“-What is that? Is it a hamburger?”

It responds with a positive nod.

“- And Do we eat this?”

The child responds by making gestures, putting hand to its mouth.

“Let's take Barbie to the salon!”

I pick up the hairbrush and hand it to the child, and then she starts combing the doll.

Methodological instruments made from E.V.A were used to teach children colors (Fig. 03), numbers (Fig. 04), gender and facial expressions (Fig. 05). This methodology becomes very effective, since visual elements, such as figures and drawings, provide better learning to autistic people.



*Fig.3: Resource made of EVA to teach colors. (Personal collection).*



*Fig.4: Resource made by E.V.A to teach numbers. (Personal Collection).*



*Fig.5: Resource made by E.V.A to teach gender and facial expressions. (Personal Collection).*

Due to the fact that people with autism have sensitivity to certain textures, such as rough, for example, this resource was developed, called “Tree of the senses” (Figure 06), where we provided children with the touch of different types of textures, aiming to decrease the discomfort caused by any of them.



*Fig.6: The tree of the senses. (Personal Collection).*

People with autism have impaired global and fine motor development, basically reflexes, balance and gait. With the objective of stimulating the improvement of these aspects and increasing your confidence, we use the trampoline and the rubber ball.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

We present some guidelines, methodologies and resources used during the workshops at CAPSi, basing our work processes on Vygotsky's Socio-Historical Theory. We highlight some cases of evolution in relation to interaction, an aspect most compromised in autistic people, emphasizing the importance of these pedagogical strategies for the full development of the autistic person since childhood.

Monitoring, being an activity to support the teaching-learning processes and preparation for future teacher training, allows the acquisition of experiences and

knowledge, both in the aspects of popular knowledge and in technical-scientific knowledge.

The demands of the market impose on the teacher the concern with the characteristics of the students, mainly in relation to students with special educational needs, since, we are not really prepared to serve them during graduation. The importance of this experience cannot be measured, but learning and living with these methodologies will be important records in daily professional practice, nurturing you with a more acute look around people with special needs.

Monitoring seeks further academic improvement in view of the opportunity for experiences, theoretical and practical activities. It is expected that this study will contribute to raising awareness around inclusive education, understanding and the importance of these types of experiences, in addition to providing a reflection on the stigmas and stereotypes in relation to people with disabilities, valuing their potential inside and outside the world. school environment with a view to promoting human emancipation, which is the true exercise of citizenship.

We believe it is necessary to extend the study to other realities. Studies are also needed to allow the monitoring of similar experiences in order to identify other difficulties and / or facilities in this process.

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